

## THE EVIDENCE

By George Munson.

"But law and sentiment are the same thing," said Rogers, the old corporation lawyer. Somebody had been lamenting the average jurymen's inability to bring in a verdict upon the evidence alone. "Sentiment is law," Rogers repeated. "It is law in its embryonic state, uncrystallized, but often better law than written codes.

"Do any of you remember the Bright murder trial of the late seventies?" he continued, looking round at



Came Upon the Rifle.

us. "No? Well, there have been many murders since then, and doubtless it was not of epoch-making importance. Yet I was led to undertake the defense of Howard Bright through sentiment.

"It was pretty Lorna Bright, the cousin of the young man, and secretly engaged to him, who persuaded me, by her protestations of Howard's innocence, to undertake so desperate

a case. Old Charles Bright had driven his son from his home, because he preferred the life of a musician to entering his business, and had forbidden Lorna, his niece and adopted child, to have anything more to do with him, under penalty of being disinherited also. That was six months before the murder occurred.

"Charles Bright was one of those cantankerous old men who are cordially hated by their neighbors. He had a big estate at Lanark, Md., to which he retired after having disposed of the business which he hoped Howard would inherit, at a price of two or three hundred thousands. Among those who hated him most strongly was Pete Jones, a small farmer whose lands he had taken when a mortgage fell due. Jones was a violent, and also a crafty character. He had made no open threat of violence, but the old man had been in sufficient fear of him to have him arrested once as a vagrant. The charge fell through, and Jones lived around the village, doing odd jobs, and cherishing a burning hatred of old man Bright.

"Now we come to the murder. On Thanksgiving eve, 1875, the servants of the old man were aroused by a cry and the sound of a shot. They ran out of the house and saw their master lying dead with a bullet wound through his head. Some fifty yards away stood Howard, a rifle in his hands. He made no resistance and was arrested and duly committed for trial.

"Some said the rifle was still hot, but others denied this, and anyway the case seemed so clear that this question did not figure for much. There might have been time for the barrel to cool after the discharge. What was obvious was that Howard, having apparently learned that his father intended to sign a will disinheriting him, had crept up to the house and murdered him.

"As I said, gentlemen, it was Lorna Bright who insisted that I undertake